Early Childhood

5.15. At about the fifth month of life the child, surrounded by blankets or other protective matter, is made to sit up. In the sixth or seventh month he will start to crawl, and once he does this he will be allowed to sleep on the floor, but not on a cot or shelf from which he might fall. The relatives encourage a child to crawl, then to stand and walk, by placing little articles as bribes in front of it. A Badaga proverb says, "See the power of the baby's legs when it crawls; see the state of the young plant." This means that the child's future life is reflected in the way it crawls; and similarly, "Judge the little children by watching the good movement of their legs while dancing." If instead of crawling a baby stretches its legs forward while sitting, and then inches its bottom forward, it is said to be a lazy child. Conversely the one who crawls on hands and knees will be walking very soon.

5.16. Children begin talking at 12 to 18 months. The parents at first use a few onomatopoeic words with them, as well as special words for children like the "baby talk" of English. Thus there are words for commonplace matters like sleep, bathe, etc., and a meal (*hittu*) for example is called *ku* for babies; *ku* is in fact ceremonial food mixed with milk.

5.17. It is the prime duty of old people in the home to educate and care for their grandchildren and great-grandchildren, particularly because the parents are often working outside somewhere. If younger people spend too much of their working hours playing with the baby someone will make the snide remark that "The thief of work has the child as a pretext." Even though children now attend school it is still the elders who teach them to talk, and then explain to them much about Badaga life. To do this they tell the children both traditional tales and stories they make up for moral instruction. In this context children often hear the Badaga proverbs, which encapsulate so much of the customary morality. Many of the folktales the children are told and then made to repeat are animal stories with some clear ethical content. Now that children go to school it is most usually after supper when they urge the elders to tell them stories. Children over five are not interested in the animal fables, and so they are told somewhat more realistic stories about Kurumba sorcerers, or about tigers and jackals that take children away at night. Such stories are told to make the children afraid of these

41 Hockings E-5 (1962-1977) 1980
AW50 Badaga AW50

887 things. Love stories are not told to children under 13. The adults themselves are not really interested in stories, only in folksongs. 603 Adults also sing to their children, and encourage them to learn 855 special children's songs from an early age; but they do also pick up 867 adult folksongs simply by listening to them.

[868] 5.18. Child upbringing does not appear to be particularly repressive. The relative freedom that smaller children enjoy, is summed up in 86 a proverb: "Children [left out on] the right-of-way will grow; [539] children [kept in] the room get rotten." Children are disciplined by a variety of threats. They are told they will be given away, if bad, to a Golla mendicant or a Kurumba tribesman. The coming of a ghost, demon, or a vaccinator is another common threat; or they may be told a tiger or a pig will take them away. Otherwise people compare a bad child unfavourably with the behaviour of his childhood friend. These threats and comparisons have little effect on older children. From the age of five or six children are jokingly told about a certain cross-cousin who will come to marry them "next year." This threat or promise is also used to enjoin proper behaviour: "If your wife saw you, she'd abuse you" (or conversely, "she'd marry you at once"). When there seems to be a choice among several cousins the parents may ask a child which he prefers, or threaten to bring a bad one to him if he misbehaves. The same treatment is used to discipline girls, with the additional possibility of telling a small girl she will be given away in marriage to a beggar, a Kota or a Kurumba, instead of to a Badaga husband. Adolescent children may not be disciplined so gently, and some of them are not unfamiliar with a rope's end.

Kindness and outright bribery are also lavished on children, as evidenced in the saying: "It is like influencing children by giving them crude sugar."

857 5.19. Between the ages of five and seven children go through a transition marked by some major changes in their daily habits. In the old days some girls would become child-brides after reaching the age of five. Nowadays the transition means spending much of the week in school instead of at home. There are other changes too. The children begin to eat from their own plates. Girls stop 857 sleeping with their fathers, though they may continue to sleep 867 with their mothers or with other children. Boys are now embarrassed to sleep with their mothers or sisters. If there are several boys 857 or several girls of similar age on one street they now band together